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ABSTRACT

As a replacement of the conventional staff-guided group tour for new students at Mercer County Community College, a self-guided tour method was developed. This method utilized a recorded cassette tape and number coded floor plan. With this method, students can be oriented in a meaningful way within their library, at their own pace with no loss of class time. Appendices include a classroom survey form, a questionnaire for new students and an evaluation form for the tour. (Author/AP)

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A SELF-GUIDED LIBRARY TOUR METHOD AT MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

THE LEARNING THEORY AND APPLICATIONS MODULE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT..... ii

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION 1

II BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE 6

III PROCEDURES 10

IV RESULTS AND EVALUATION OF THE SELF-GUIDED TOUR. 14

V RECOMMENDATIONS 15

VI REFERENCES 16

Appendix

A. CLASSROOM SURVEY FORM 18

B. A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NEW STUDENTS 19

C. SCRIPT USED IN RECORDING 20

D. NUMBER-CODED LIBRARY FLOOR PLAN 29

E. EVALUATION FORM FOR THE TOUR 30

F. PEER SIGNATURE SHEET 31

I. INTRODUCTION

Mercer County Community College was established in Trenton New Jersey, by the unanimous vote of the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders on January 11 1966, in accordance with the County College Law (N.J.) of 1962, to meet the educational needs of the growing community.

The county it serves is located in the central part of the State of New Jersey. The area covers 228 square miles. In 1970, the county had a population of 304,116 people[1] and an assessed value of 2.32 billion dollars in 1974.[2]

In July 1967, Mercer County Community College merged with Trenton Junior College and School of Industrial Arts, an institution founded in 1901. It was housed in antiquated facilities and lacked an adequate financial base, relying heavily on student tuition for its operations. After the merger, the College was able to start its academic program in the summer of 1967 in existing interim facilities and with 153 full-time staff. The first regular academic year (1967-68) for the new college saw 1,247 full-time students enrolled, including 515 returning former Trenton Junior College students. Part-time enrollment totaled 1,571.

In June, 1972 the College moved to its new $23,000,000 campus, which now consists of eleven buildings occupying

383,000 square feet. The new Kerney Center, which has 32,000 square feet, was opened in the city of Trenton in Spring, 1976. The Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools granted the College full accreditation in April, 1970, and again in January, 1976.

As of Spring, 1976, the College has increased its enrollment of full-time students from 1,247 (1967) to 32,000 and of part-time students from 571 (1967) to 4,500.

The Library has its own building with 27,753 net square feet of functional area. New assignable square feet per full-time student is 9.8, which means that the Library has 0.3 square feet more than an average of other New Jersey county college libraries.[3] It is located at the northwest end of the campus complex and serves the educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the college community.

The Library has a collection of over 50,000 volumes and adds approximately 3,000 volumes each year. It subscribes to over 700 periodicals and has more than 10,000 audio-visual materials such as phonodiscs, cassettes, and microfilms. It has many independent study facilities including carrels equipped to receive televised and video-taped programs, five group study rooms, and a conference room. A typing room

for student use is located on the second floor. To administer library services, the Library has a staff of five professional librarians, two technical assistants, and four clerical workers.

The Library is as distinctive as the college which it serves. In carrying out effectively the goals and philosophy of the College and interests of its faculty and students, the Library:

(1) selects and acquires library materials;

(2) prepares these materials for the use of students, faculty, and others;

(3) circulates materials;

(4) provides inter-library loan services;

(5) gives reference services;

(6) provides supportive equipment;

(7) gives instructions in the use of the Library;

(8) interprets library collections to the administration, faculty, students, and community;

(9) supplements and continues classroom instruction;

(10) provides adequate and comfortable physical facilities for study.

To give instructions in the use of the Library and to introduce library collections to the new students, the Library designed an individualized orientation program in

summer of 1974 and began to use it in the fall semester, 1974.[4]

The format of this individualized orientation program consisted basically of two parts. The first part was a 20-minute group tour of the Library guided by a reference librarian. The second part included two individualized learning modules planned to teach students how to use various periodical indexes and the card catalog. The latter modules were designed to be completed within 30 minutes by the average student. Each student was given a 10-page learning package to be completed at the end of the group tour, and he was to return his signed answer sheet to the librarian after completion.

While this individualized orientation program has been successful in fulfilling its objective, conducting the group tour in a way that would be meaningful and interesting to new students has not always been easy. The success of the tour depended entirely upon the librarian's ability to explain the relevant areas and to make the tour reflect the participant's interest. We librarians are apt to introduce library services to new students in terms of how we see the services ourselves, but the new students may see things in different ways.[5] Thus, many new students may lose interest in the Library simply because our presentation of library services seems irrelevant to their needs and their world.

Most librarians who have guided the tour suggested that a new, well-designed tour method would improve the orientation program. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to design a new method of conducting library tours at Mercer County Community College that will be compatible with the second part of the two learning modules.

II. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Beginning college students need to become acquainted with library facilities and the location of available services. Most college and university libraries offer some kind of library tour.[6] According to the literature, there are several kinds of library tour methods that have been developed:

(1) conventional library tour guided by librarians

(2) conventional library tour guided by trained students

(3) self-guided tour with a written instruction and floor plan

(4) modified self-guided tour such as treasure hunt

(5) armchair tour by utilizing film, video-tape, slides with cassette, and other media to introduce the library services.

A conventional, staff-guided library tour for freshman students is still used in many academic libraries even though it has many shortcomings.[7]

At Mercer County Community College, a twenty-minute group tour of the Library, that is available to freshman and is conducted by a librarian, includes visiting different areas of the Library and presenting explanations of the various library services. For example, the basic circulation procedures are explained at the beginning of the tour, which takes place near the circulation desk. The tour conductor points out differenc

between circulating and non-circulating materials as the group approaches the reference collection. The pattern continues throughout the remainder of the tour as the librarian discusses the various library materials and location of the library facilities, taking time occasionally to demonstrate the operation of the audio-visual and other self-service equipment.

The advantage of this kind of tour is that it reaches large numbers of potential users with minimal use of library resources and staff's time. However, the tour often becomes boring and students remain unmotivated. Ronkin stated that the regular library tour fails to draw attention to certain especially useful items; prevents students at the rear of the group from seeing and hearing the conductor; fails to provide opportunities for students to handle the items shown and to examine them closely, and does not allow time for individual students to notice and explore items of special interest.[8] Also, when trained students guide the tour, they may give out misinformation.[9] Ronkin, therefore, suggested a self-guided tour method having a marked floor plan and one-page written instruction for the student use.[10]

Offering another point of view, Melum states that subject-oriented tours, given to class groups and scheduled upon request by faculty followed by instruction, are more effective

because the students are motivated by class assignments.[11] However, the problem of interrupting library patrons by such large tour activities should be considered and minimized.

Newman on the other hand asserted that library orientation in the community college should be "flexible, up-to-date, and susceptible to friendly, relaxed presentation,"[12] because most students in the community colleges have different backgrounds and academic preparations.

Kirk, who expressed yet another view, made a study of a comparison of methods of library instruction for students in a four year college. The methods he used were the lecture-demonstration and the guided exercise designed to guide students through an actual library search on a particular problem. Kirk concluded that neither method is superior.[13]

At the University of Massachusetts Library, a self-guided tour for freshmen was appraised highly over a slide-tape program.[14]

The armchair tour method also differs from the other tours. It does not require the physical presence of the students at the various areas discussed in the audio-visual presentation. However, the audio-visual tour often proves expensive to maintain and difficult to individualize for specific class situations.[15]

A summary of the review of pertinent literature indicates that there is no single best method which can be applied in every situation. Any of the methods reviewed could be used effectively when adapted to the need and situation of a particular case.

III. PROCEDURES

Due to negative criticism of the library group tour of Mercer County Community College, a meeting was called on September 10, 1975, to discuss, expand, or revise the library group tour for the new students. Two counselors, who were in charge of the course, Orientation to College, OC 101, (which is a requirement for all new and transfer students) and three librarians, who usually conduct library orientation programs, were in attendance. The consensus from this meeting recognized the need for improving or redesigning a self-paced tour method in terms of students' needs and interests, and prompt action was recommended.

During the month of September, at every library orientation class, a questionnaire was distributed during the class to find out what most students wanted to know about the Library (See Appendix A). A similar questionnaire was distributed to randomly selected new students during the spring registration on January 28, 1976 (See Appendix B).

In all, one hundred and twenty-five questions were generated. These questions were listed individually on index cards and coded for similarity in content and thought. After careful editing and revising, the number of questions

was reduced to ninety-one.

To condense the number still more, any question that was not asked at least twice was deleted from the list. The remaining 12 questions became the framework of a preliminary script for tour guides. These 12 questions fell into eight broad areas:

(1) basic circulation information

(2) periodical collections

(3) card catalog

(4) reference services

(5) use of microfilm collection

(6) periodical indexes

(7) other special collections

(8) use of the Film Library and other facilities located on the second floor.

Next, a preliminary script was written. It described the library in eight separate sections to make sure that the script fit the description of the surroundings at the time of the tour.

Early in February, 1976, another meeting was held. The OC 101 instructors (two counselors and three librarians) attended. The script was discussed and reviewed at the meeting. Several minor corrections and revisions were made to ensure

the validity of the contents (See Appendix C).

Stop numbers from one to eight were written in the library floor plan to assist touring students. The numbered floor plan was designed to serve as a written guide (See Appendix D).

Then, the script was recorded on a cassette tape by two members of the library staff; one man and one woman having voices suitable for recording. The two persons alternately narrated the script, section by section. To actively engage the students' interest, the recording was done during an actual tour in the Library. Five duplicate tapes were made for use in a small experimental group. Five portable cassette players, equipped with earphones, were borrowed from the College Media Center and placed at the main circulation desk. Twenty-five volunteer students and seven faculty members listened to the cassettes during March, 1976. Any student or faculty to be oriented was encouraged to check out a cassette player, an earphone, and the taped program, with the numbered floor plan, at the circulation desk. Each participant was asked to fill out an evaluation form for this self-guided tour after completion of the tour (See Appendix E). The summary of the participants' evaluations is stated in the next chapter.

During this experimental period, two personalized learning modules with practice sheets were not used, However,

in real situations, these two units of learning modules will follow the self-guided tour, and students will be asked to return their practice sheets to their OC 101 instructor.

IV. THE RESULTS AND EVALUATION OF THE SELF-GUIDED TOUR

As a replacement for the conventional librarian-guided group tour for new students at Mercer County Community College, the newly designed, self-guided tour seems to have encouraged individual student effort. It has allowed for development of individual interests during the tour and has greatly reduced the time required for staff participation. Furthermore, this individual tour does not utilize any class time; each student is to come to the library on his own time when the library orientation is assigned by his OC 101 instructor.

Students can be oriented in a meaningful way within the Library, at their own pace, with no loss of class time. After completing the program, students state that they leave the Library with a new sense of confidence in their ability to use its services and facilities.

At this point, according to the consensus of the group who participated in the library tour, the self-guided library tour merits general consideration. It seems very promising and also shows a potential for successful improvement in library tour methods.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made to the chairperson of the counseling department and the director of library services:

(1) adopt the newly designed, self-guided library tour method as a part of the OC 101 course;

(2) purchase 20 cassette tape players to be used for this tour program;

(3) restructure the OC 101 course, so that students can take the library orientation any time during the five-week period at their own convenience.

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9. Melum, p 60.

10. Ronkin, p 218.

11. Melum, p 60.

12. Newman, John "Library Orientation in the Community College" Wilson Library Bulletin May, 1972 p 856.

13. Kirk, Thomas "A Comparison of Two Methods of Library Instruction for Students in Introductory Biology" College and Research Libraries November, 1971 p 473.

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15. Stoffle, Carla and Bonn, Gabriella "An Inventory of Library Orientation and Instruction Methods" RQ Winter, 1973 p 131.

APPENDIX A

Please write down any questions you want to ask about our library.

Thank you very much.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

APPENDIX B

MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

P.O. BOX B
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08690 TELEPHONE: (609) 586-4800 1200 OLD TRENTON ROAD

January 28, 1976

Dear new students:

The Library staff welcomes you. The Library is located at the northwest end of the campus complex. It serves the intellectural, cultural, and recreational needs of MCCC students. The Library has a collection of over 50,000 volumes, receives over 600 periodicals, has approximately 3,000 records, and has over 10,000 other audio-visual materials to provide students and faculty with basic materials for study.

To prepare a better library orientation program relevant to your needs, we would like to hear from you. Please write below any questions you would like answered about your new library. We do appreciate your cooperation. Please return this questionnaire to the Library today before you leave this campus. If you need more space, please use the other side of this sheet.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

Appendix C

This recorded message was made to help you learn the location of various library facilities and collections as you tour the Mercer County Community College Library. This recording was made with the cooperation of counselors, English teachers, and library staff.

Your self-guided tour will take about 20 minutes of your time. However, you may repeat it as many times as you wish. This tape should be used with the number-coded library floor plan.

You will begin the tour at the Circulation Desk on the first floor, then go to the second stop, which is the Reference Desk, and the third stop, which is the microfilm area including various indexes. Your fourth stop will be the area of Over-Sized Books and College Catalogs. Your fifth stop will be in the Vertical File area. At the sixth stop, your Card Catalog will be explained. Your seventh stop will be at the landing of the stairway where current periodicals are located. Then, you will go to our Film Library on the second floor.

To introduce our Library, let me describe the collection briefly. We have over 50,000 volumes, 10,000 audio-visual materials including 3,000 records and 700 16mm films. The

library receives over 700 periodicals.

Our facilities include independent study carrels with television and taped programs, several group study rooms, and a typing room.

The Library has a staff of five professional librarians to carry out effectively the goals and philosphy of the College and interests of its faculty and students.

This is your first stop -- the Circulation Desk -- there is some basic information about our library circulation procedures. Our faculty, staff, students, and alumni may borrow materials. Borrowers are required to show a current I.D. card. To check out materials, you must write your name and I.D. number on the blue computer circulation card inserted in each book. A desk attendant will check your I.D. card and stamp the due date on the book and the blue card. Then, we keep the card and you may have the book which is to be returned on the due date.

Books, phonodiscs, vertical files, and college catalogs can be checked out for three weeks. Reference books, periodicals, microfilms, reserve materials, text books and all of the audio-visual materials are not circulated. Some reserve materials may be taken out after 8 P.M. for overnight use. Unless a request has been made by another borrower, materials may be renewed for another three weeks.

Please report any lost materials at once at the circulation desk. The replacement charge is the cost of the book plus a processing fee of $2.00. All library obligations must be taken care of prior to the end of each semester. This will eliminate the possibility of grades and transcripts being withheld.

The Library hours during regular semester are: Monday through Thursday 8 A,M, to 10 P.M.; Friday 8 A.M. to 5 P.M.

Contrary to popular belief, we don't discourage conversation in the Library, but we ask that you use one of our group study rooms. If you want something to drink or eat while you are studying, please study and then use the snack bar in the Student Center Building. We are trying to keep the ants down.

If someone in the Library refuses to let you study in peace, please let the reference librarian handle it professionally. He has a black belt. I know he has a genuine leather one.

Some materials are kept behind the Circulation Desk. They are back issues of our periodicals, reserve books, and text books. If you want to refer to these issues, ask the librarian to help you.

Currently, This Circulation Desk has been equipped with

a book detection system. All library materials must be checked out properly to avoid setting off an alarm and locking the exit gate.

Now please move toward the second stop which is the Information Desk. Many of us call it the "reference desk". Anyway, please ask all questions or for other assistance at the Information Desk. A trained librarian is always on duty when the Library is open. The librarian on duty at the Information Desk is actually in charge of all aspects of the public services, so, if you have any problem, you should first contact him at the Information Desk. He can also help you find appropriate subject headings, periodical indexes, and specific types of information such as statistics, biographical material literary criticisms, and quotations. As he works with you, he can perhaps suggest additional sources of material which you may have missed.

There are also several first-hand information sources at this desk such as the Board of Trustee's Minutes, curriculum manuals, school year books, and telephone books, etc. Our book collection is divided into 21 groups by subject according to the Library of Congress Classification system. But fiction and biographies are located in separate sections with the prefix of Bio for biography and Fic for fiction.

The reference collection is also separated from our regular collection. All reference books have the prefix Ref above the call numbers. Three stacks of reference books are located just in front of the Information Desk. In this section, you will find most standard dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories, handbooks and other basic reference materials. When you simply cannot find the answers or locate materials on your subject, ask the Reference librarian for help. Get to know your reference librarians, they want to know you.

Now, please move to your third stop where microfilms are kept. We have The New York Times newspapers from 1940 to date in these three gray microfilm cabinets, and other periodicals on microfilm will be found in two gray cabinets near the wall. Each drawer has labels indicating the titles of periodicals.

In the microfilm room, there are six microfilm reading machines. The one in the center labeled "3M Reader-Printer" can also be used for printouts from any articles on microfilm.

When you come out from the microfilm room, you will see three Index Tables. There are twenty-nine indexes located on these Index Tables. New York Times Indexes are on the shelves against the wall. Green colored books are the most popular Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. Please examine these indexes one by one, especially any subject area you are interested in. You may turn off this recording until

you are finished taking a look at some of these indexes. Then turn it on again. If you need assistance, please see the Reference Librarian at the Information Desk.

There are two photocopiers in the Library which charge $0.05 per page. The microfilm printer charges $0.10 per page.

Now let's move to the Government Documents area. The State of New Jersey publishes a wide variety of materials. These two file cabinets keep all of our cataloged New Jersey State Government Documents. We are one of the selected depository libraries in this area, so we receive almost all publications made available by New Jersey government.

A few steps away from the document cabinets, you will find a collection of fine art reproductions. If you like, you may take time to look them over. These prints can be checked out for four weeks at the Circulation Desk.

Now let's move to Oversize Books and College Catalog area, which is the fourth stop on the floor plan. Any book higher than 12 inches, we call oversize books. You will find an asterisk on the spine of the book.

The Library has almost 3,000 college catalogs including some of foreign countries. There is also a microfiche collection of college catalogs in the Microfilm Reading Room. All of these catalogs are arranged by the name of the college.

however, microfiche collection is arranged by states and within state, by the names of the colleges.

The next fifth stop is the Vertical File. The Vertical File is a kind of miscellaneous information source, mostly consisting of newspaper clippings, small pamphlets, booklets, or magazine articles. These materials are arranged by subject only, not cataloged in any way except assigned a subject heading. Often, this file contains information on subjects that cannot be located from books and periodicals.

Now let's move to the Card Catalog, which in the sixth stop. Please look closely at the four sections of the Card Catalog. The first section from the left is the Author Catalog. The second section is the Title Catalog and the third section is the Subject Catalog, the last section is Non-Print Materials. If you need more detailed instruction on how to use these card catalogs, please ask assistance at the Information Desk.

Now, let's move toward the current Periodical Display Shelves. We keep only one of the most current issue of each periodical here under a plastic cover. All back issues are kept behind the Circulation Desk, and all copies bound in volumes are kept behind the stairway. Magazines on microfilm are filed in the microfilm cabinets. All of these magazines are arranged by title. If a name of an organization is a part of the title, we file the magazine under the name of the

organization. For example, "Journal of the American Dietetic Association," will be found under--American Dietetic Association, Journal. Bulletin of American Association of University Professors will be found under American Association of University Professors, Bulletin.

Behind the current periodical shelves, there is a small collection of newspapers, We receive 25 local and national papers. Ten of the most popular papers are on the newspaper sticks, Before you go upstairs, I would like to bring to your attention our paperback exchange center and best seller collection which are located near the landing of the stairway. If you want to read any of the paperbacks on the paperback exchange stack, just bring any of your paperbacks and exchange it for the one you want. The Library is also maintaining and updating a collection of best sellers. You can check them out at the Circulation Desk for one week, Now, this concludes the tour of the first floor. Please turn off your cassette player until you reach the Film Library, LB221, on the second floor.

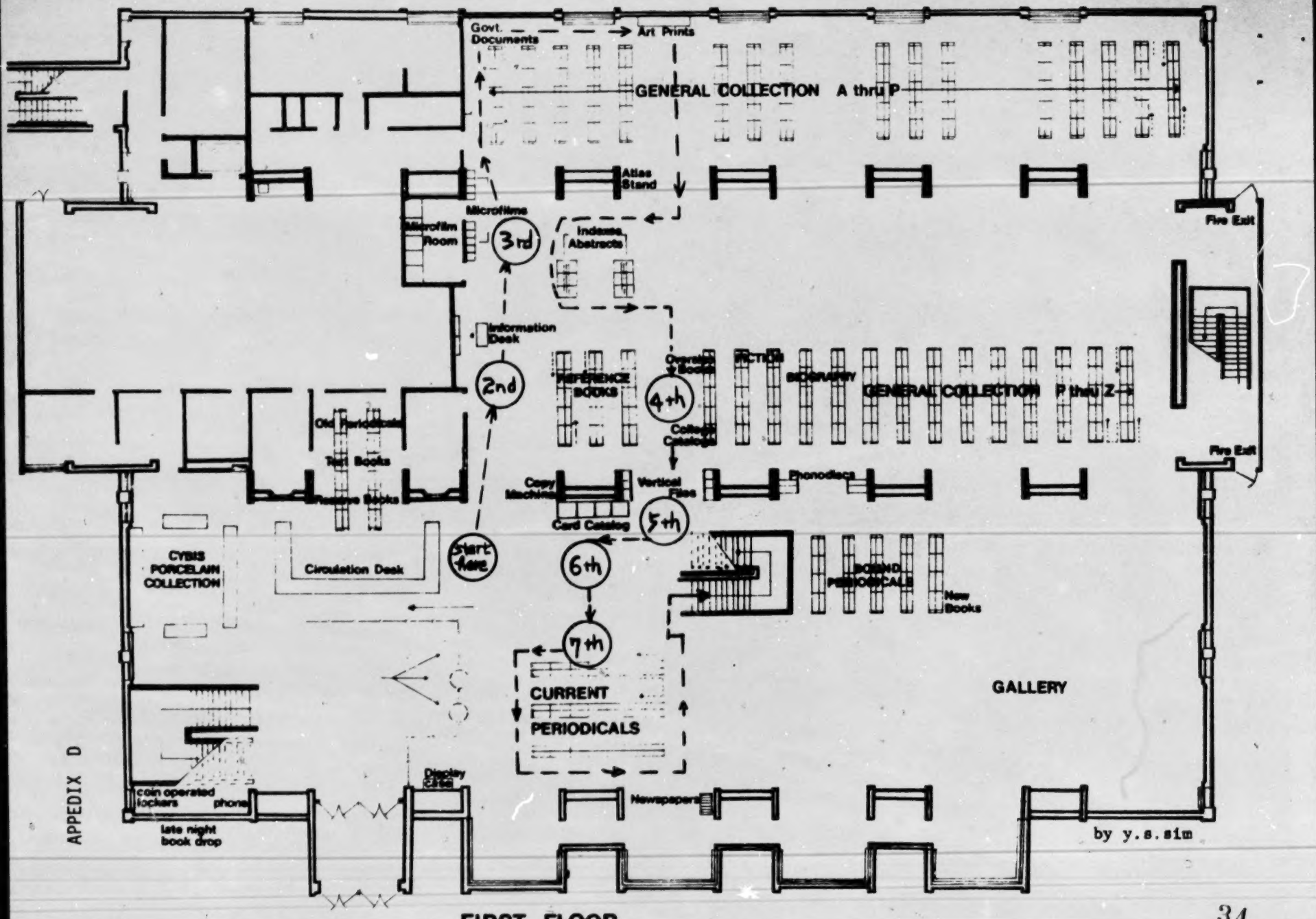
This is the eighth stop and the last stop in your self-guided library tour. In addition to this Film Library, you will see a typing room, three audio-visual preview rooms, and five group study rooms. The typing room is always open, but to use one

of the group study rooms, you must secure a key at the main circulation desk.

The Film Library you are looking at now carries over 700 16mm films. All of these films are cataloged, and you will find them in our main card catalog. Also, there is a separate non-print book catalog which lists all non-print material including 16mm films. You may ask for one copy of this book-catalog at the Film Library. Each entry is divided by subject and by format. If you have an assignment to use the audio-visual materials, be sure to ask your instructor to explain exactly what you are to use, what format it is, and the title of the material.

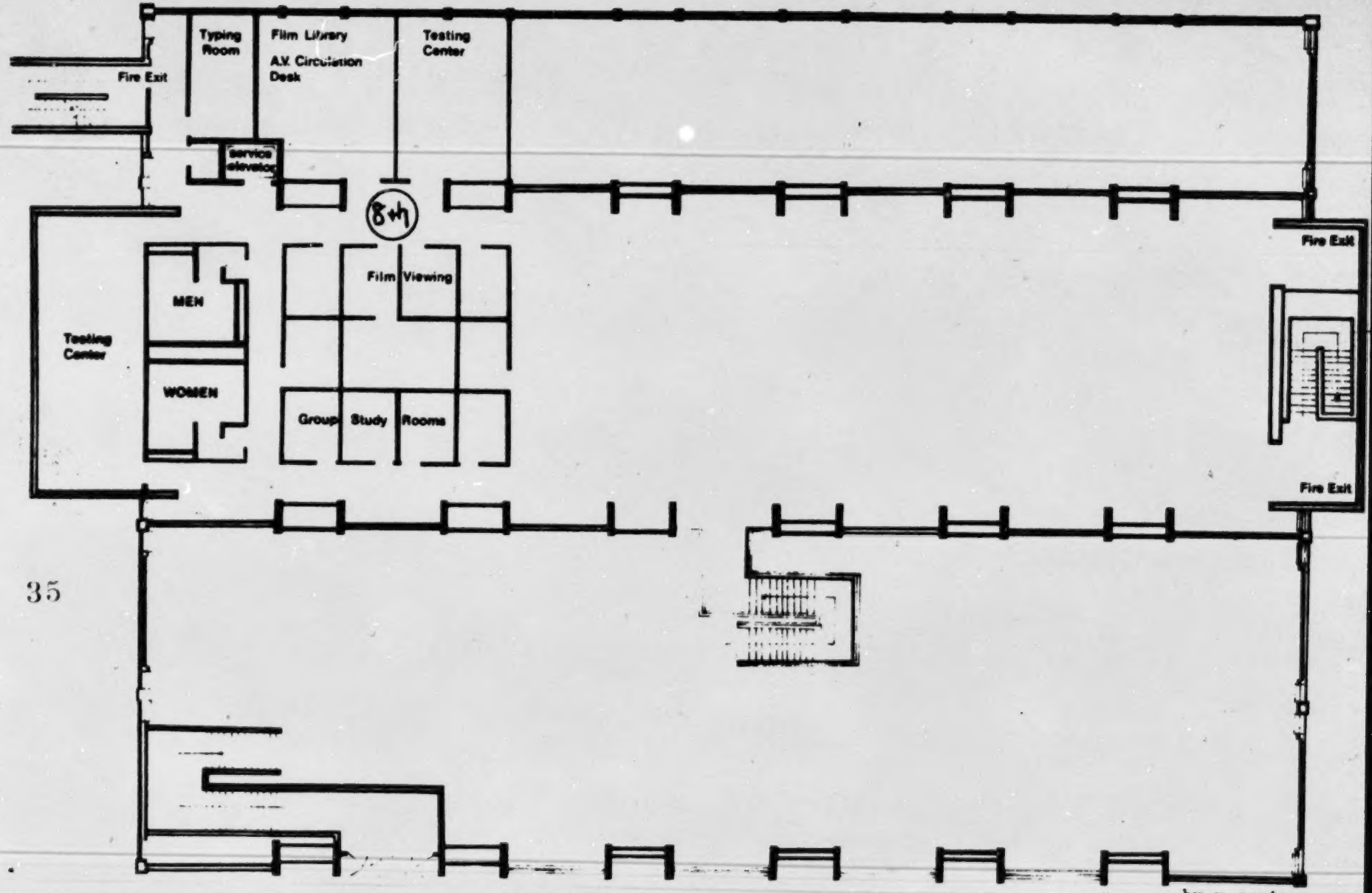
Now you know that this Library is the heart of Mercer County Community College. We stay open longer than any other office on campus. We serve more people than any other office or department throughout the whole college.

We thank you for your interest in the heart of the College. This concludes the self-guided library tour. We hope to meet you in person very soon.



APPEDIX D

FIRST FLOOR



35

SECOND FLOOR

36

APPENDIX E

You have just finished our newly developed self-guided library tour. We would like to hear your honest opinion about this tour. We have spent considerable time in developing it and have sought advice from many individuals in the college community. However, we believe that there is still room for improvement. For this reason, we again ask your help. Please answer the following five questions.

1. Did the tour give you enough information about the Library ?

   ( ) Yes.
   ( ) No. If your answer is "No", please comment_____
   _____
   _____

2. Did you find any discrepancies between the recorded message and the written floor plan?

   ( ) Yes. If your answer is "Yes", please explain._____
   _____
   _____

   ( ) No.

3. Did you ever get lost during the tour because the direction was not stated correctly?

   ( ) Yes. If "Yes", where?_____
   ( ) No.

4. Were the voice, pronunciation, and intonation clear and easily understandable?

   ( ) Yes.
   ( ) No. If "No", please explain._____
   _____

5. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to improve this tour?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____